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# The Finnish National Report on the Politicization of the pö Refugee Crisis in Public Debate

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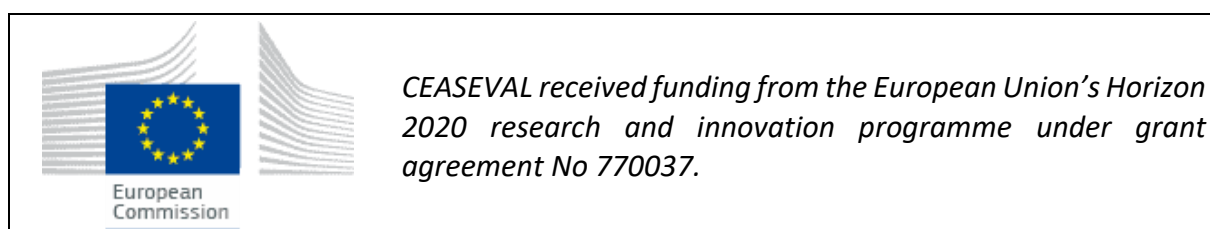
## **The Finnish National Report on the Politicization of the “Refugee Crisis” in Public Debate**

**Niko Pyrhönen & Östen Wahlbeck**

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## **The Finnish National Report on the Politicization of the “Refugee Crisis” in Public Debate**

### **Abstract**

*This report addresses the politicization of common European policy for refugee relocation, with particular focus on the question of responsibility for the so-called “refugee crisis”. As Finland faced the tenfold increase in the annual number of asylum seekers in 2015, public debate on the topic was rapidly electrified. The media attention culminated in September, when Finland decided as the only member state to abstain from voting on the issue of relocation. The decision was widely considered to be imposed on the Finnish government by the Eurosceptic, right-wing populist Finns party, whose path to the coalition government was paved with the party’s highly mediatized anti-immigration political rhetoric during the past decade.*

*This report defines politicization as a practice of competitive claims-making in in the public sphere. Politicization is analyzed within two distinct corpora: a mainstream news corpus of 127 articles in Finland’s largest daily newspaper, and a parliamentary debates corpus consisting of 26 addresses by Finnish MPs to the floor during 10 plenary sessions. On the basis of quantitative and qualitative analysis, we conclude that while both arenas exerted strong influence on public opinion and heavily politicized the issue of refugee relocation, there are important differences in how the question of responsibility was framed within the two contexts.*

*The articles published during the first episode of contention (March – November 2015) focus on the strife between Visegrád countries and other member states. The articles underline EU’s shortcomings in mediating the conflicted interests among member states, presenting Finland’s decision to abstain as tacit support to the bloc opposing common relocation mechanisms, and decrying the ensuing impact to Finland’s previously conciliatory reputation within the EU. On the other hand, the parliamentary debates taking place in the turn of the year are largely dominated by Finns party MPs. The debates emphasize Finland’s sovereign responsibility to prevent crime and protect the autochthonous population’s welfare from irregular migration, often framed in terms of “illegal refugees.” While refugees plight is repeatedly presented as the responsibility of the sending countries, the MPs commonly assert that the EU is responsible for letting in “the wave of refugees”.*

**Keywords:** refugees, policy, EU, media, international relations, immigration, nativism, public opinion

### **Cite as :**

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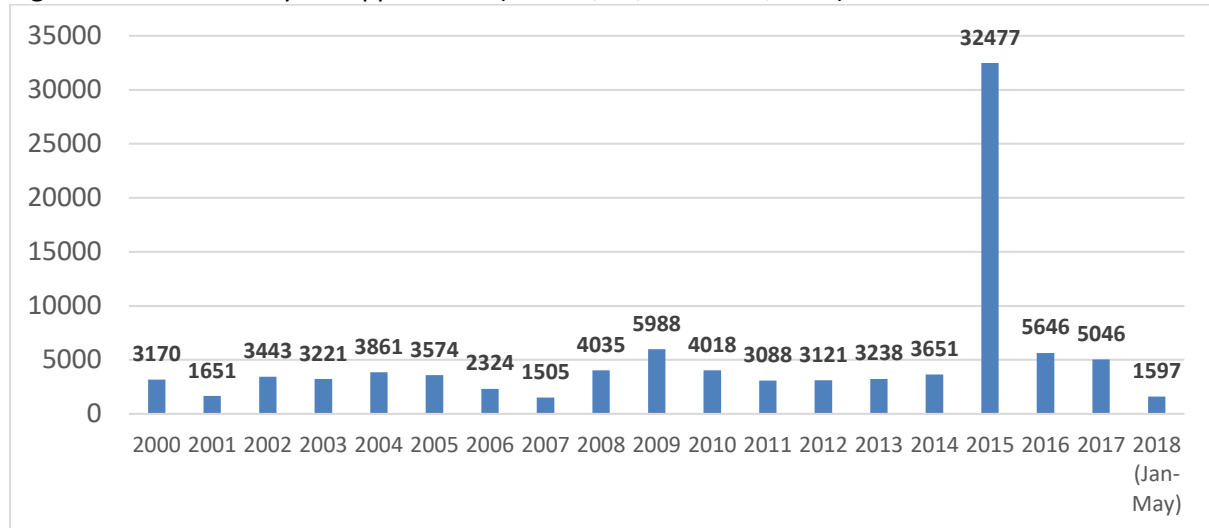
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## 1. Introduction

Between January 2000 and May 2018, Finland had received a total of 94 654 asylum seekers (Statistics Finland 2017; Finnish Immigration Service 2018). As illustrated in the graph below, before the 'refugee crisis' of 2015 the total number of asylum seekers had remained relatively constant, fluctuating between 1500 and 6000 asylum seekers (avg. 3326/year).

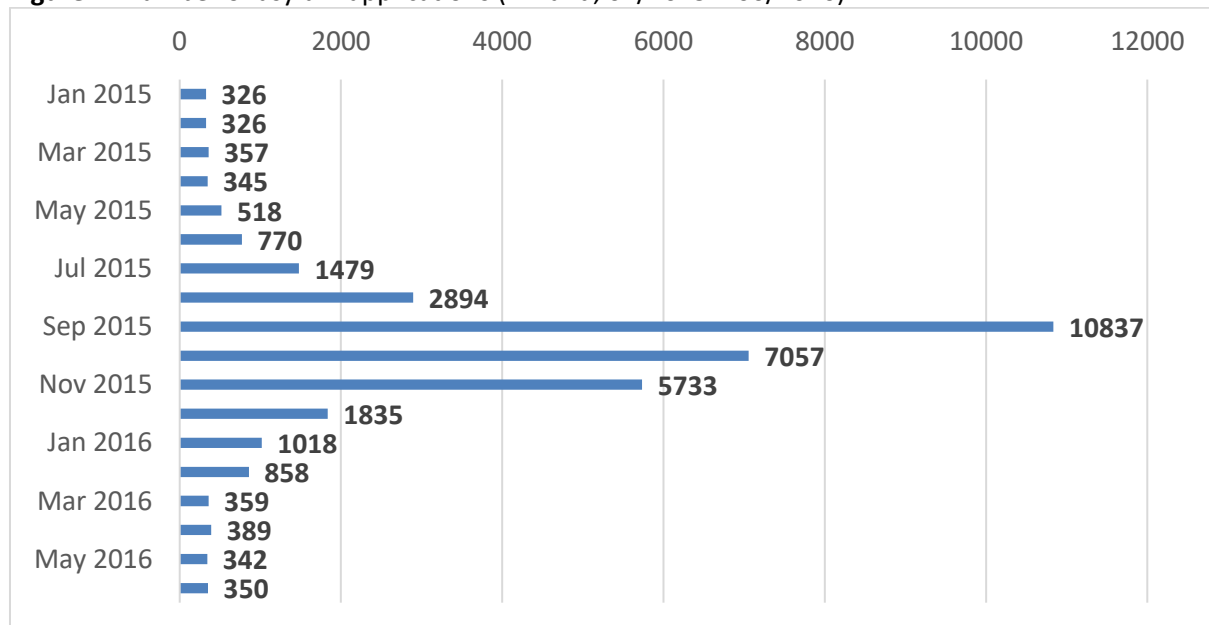
**Figure 1:** Number of asylum applications (Finland, 01/2000 – 05/2018)



Source: Statistics Finland 2017

In 2015, the 'refugee crisis' marked the arrival of 32477 asylum seekers, most of whom applied for asylum in Finland during the second half of 2015. This figure represents a nearly ten-fold increase in comparison to both the average number of asylum seekers between 2000 and 2014 (3326) and that of 2014 (3651). After the peak, the number of monthly asylum seekers soon returned to the pre-2015 levels during the first half of 2016:

**Figure 2:** Number of asylum applications (Finland, 01/2015 – 06/2016)



Source: Statistics Finland 2017

To contextualize these figures to other EU countries during the ‘refugee crisis’, it is worth noting that Finland received the sixth most asylum seekers per capita of the EU-28 countries between 2015 and 2016, after Hungary, Sweden, Austria, Germany and Malta (Zaun 2018, 50).

### **1.1 Background: Immigration as political question in Finland**

The origins of politicization of “the immigration question” in Finland date back to the early 2000s. While the established parties in the parliament had been occasionally framing immigration as the do-or-die question for the Finnish welfare state in the parliamentary since the beginning of the millennium (Pyrhönen 2015a, 83–87), it was the right-wing populist Finns party that started pushing forward an immigration-oriented political agenda in their electoral manifestos. While the party had been mobilizing a heterogeneous constituency of both working class and middle class voters behind their anti-elitist and anti-EU oriented populist agenda, they had only received modest success in parliamentary elections up until 2011. During that time, anti-immigration candidates were still “peripheral and did not receive much space in the official party materials (Ylä-Anttila 2017, 39). However, since 2009 onwards, the anti-immigration rhetoric started to feature more prominently in online forums affiliated to the Finns party, reflecting a similar and simultaneous shift both in the party’s campaign material and in the preferences of the party’s voters (Hatakka 2016, 6). By the 2011 and 2015 parliamentary elections, the Finns party had begun to aggressively campaigning with promises to radically revise the Finnish immigration policy in order to “save the welfare state” (Pyrhönen 2015a, 118–19), receiving nearly one fifth of all the votes in both elections.

The ‘refugee crisis’ of 2015 intensified only a few months after the Finns party first joined the coalition government with two other right-of-center parties. Largely as a result of the party composition of the new government, the Finnish government had adopted an immigration programme where new policy measures for controlling immigration in general, and hesitance towards the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) in particular, featured markedly higher than previously (Wahlbeck 2018). The politicization of the refugee crisis and the CEAS was further reflected in the Finnish mainstream media space – evidenced by the proliferation of critical framing of immigration-related news output, where ‘the crisis’ was portrayed as one pertaining to Finnish and European decision-making on the asylum seekers, rather than a humanitarian crisis (Perälä and Niemi 2018).

### **1.2 Politicization: Theory and operationalization**

In this report, we analyse the politicization of ‘the refugee crisis’ in Finland by focusing on the question of responsibility for refugees. For the purposes of this analysis, we define politicization as “a practice of competitive claims-making in the public sphere” that can be assessed through the development of salience and diversity of opinions on a specific societal topic (Wilde 2011, 561, 571). Thus defined, politicization can be analysed in three distinct but interrelated domains: politicization of national and EU institutions, of decision-making processes and of issues (Wilde 2011, 561–63). Our approach puts a specific focus on the third domain, issues. This allows us to identify and explain ‘patterns and drivers of politicization’ (Wilde, Leupold, and Schmidtke 2016, 4–5, 10–12). By illustrating how, when, and why competitive claims-making in the public sphere affects, alters and recreates responsibility-pertinent public narratives on ‘the refugee crisis’, we analyse who are considered responsible (EU, member states, specific political actors...), to whom are they presented to be responsible (asylum seekers, citizens, the EU...) and what it means to be responsible.

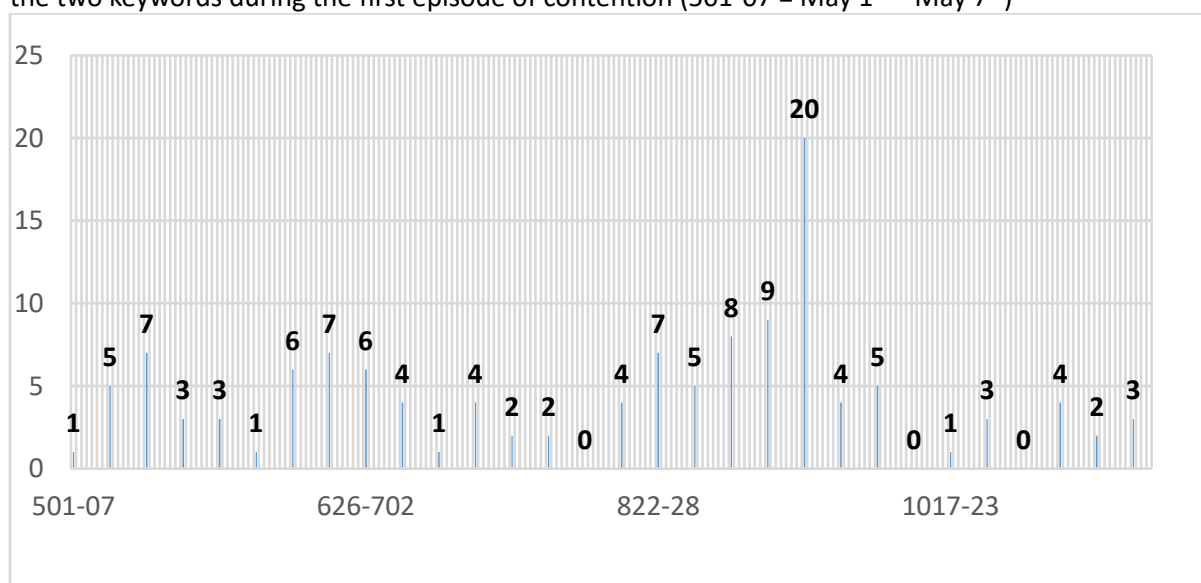
### 1.3 Data and methods

In order to properly capture the recent qualitative and quantitative changes in saliency and polarization of immigration issues, particularly concerning the refugee quotas and responsibility sharing, we have compiled two sets of data<sup>1</sup>, both pertaining to a specific episode of contention. The first data set is collected from mainstream news articles on the EU's relocation quota that were published between May and November 2015 ('the first episode of contention'). The second data set consists of parliamentary debates on control measures against irregular migration, border controls and deportations of "illegal" migrants, taking place between January and June 2016 ('the second episode of contention'). Details on the collection of this data, as well as its compilation into two corpora for qualitative analysis, is discussed in the following.

#### 1.3.1 The first episode of contention (May – November 2015): Politicization of refugee quotas in mainstream media

Helsingin Sanomat (HS) is Finland's main daily newspaper. With about 700 000 daily readers, it is the largest newspaper in the Nordic countries, an important news source and a significant arena of public debate in Finland. We were granted access to the database of Helsingin Sanomat, allowing us to scrape the whole corpus of 29293 articles published between May and November 2015, ie. the first episode of contention. After experimenting with various means of advanced search queries with "Notepad ++" -software together with a research assistant, we decided to build a corpus for analysis from the huge data set by using two keywords "kiintiö" ("quota") and "sisäinen siirto" ("relocation quota"). From there, we proceeded by manually removing articles from the corpus that did not pertain to immigration, leaving a corpus of 127 articles:

**Figure 3:** Weekly distribution of immigration-pertinent articles within corpus featuring at least one of the two keywords during the first episode of contention (501-07 = May 1<sup>st</sup> – May 7<sup>th</sup>)



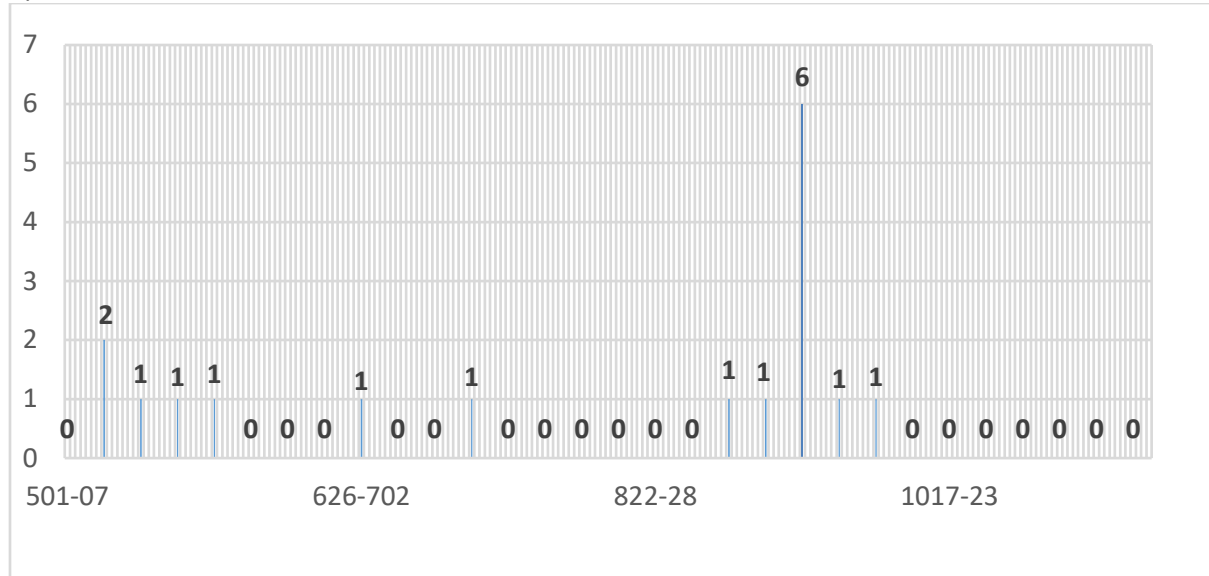
Out of these 127 articles, we selected 17 for qualitative analysis, based on "solidarity", "responsibility sharing" or "relocation" featuring in the title. This allowed focusing the analysis on articles that most explicitly discuss the WP5 topic. The distribution of the selected articles across the timeframe on the

<sup>1</sup> Help from two postdoctoral researchers, Gwenaëlle Bauvois (University of Helsinki) and Tuukka Ylä-Anttila (University of Tampere), was instrumental in compiling the two corpora.



analysis coincides with the temporal distribution of the whole body of 127 articles, with a similarly distinct mid-September peak:

**Figure 4:** Weekly distribution of articles selected from the corpus for the qualitative analysis of the first episode of contention



12.9.2015	Pakko on huono konsultti	Compulsion is a poor consultant	editorial
22.9.2015/a	Pakolaisvastuu on jaettava tasaisemmin	The responsibility for refugees must be shared more equally	editorial
23.9.2015/b	EU puski läpi pakolaiskiintiöt	The EU rammed the refugee quotas through	newspaper article
23.9.2015/c	EU päätti kiintiöistä turvapaikanhakijoille	The EU decided for the quotas for asylum seekers	newspaper article
23.9.2015/d	EU puski läpi kiistellyt kiintiöt	The EU rammed the contested refugee quotas through	newspaper article
24.9.2015/a	Suomi jättäytyi yksin ilman riittävää syytä	Finland left itself alone for no sufficient reason	editorial
24.9.2015/b	EU-komission ratkaisuehdotuksia Euroopan pakolaiskriisiin	The EU Commission's solution proposals for the European refugee crisis	newspaper article
28.9.2015	Ajaako pakolaissopimus Suomen suvereniteetin ohi?	Will the refugee agreement surpass the sovereignty of Finland?	letter to the editor
6.10.2015	EU alkaa sijoittaa pakolaisia uudelleen	The EU is starting to relocate refugees	newspaper article

### *1.3.2 The second episode of contention (January – June 2016): Politicization of irregular migration in Finnish parliamentary debates*

This data set consists of Finnish Parliament plenary session minutes between January and June 2016. The minutes were provided for research use by The Language Bank of Finland ([www.kielipankki.fi](http://www.kielipankki.fi)). The dataset contains the full transcripts of the 70 sessions taking place between January and June 2016; consisting of 6819 addresses to the parliamentary floor, a total of 1,166,355 words. Making use of natural language processing capabilities provided by the Python programming language, we searched for bigrams, two-word sequences in their lemmatized form, that pertain to 'illegally' residing in Finland, deportation and border control, picking a total of ten bigrams as follows:

- 1) laittomasti oleskella = illegally reside
- 2) laitton maahantulija = illegal incomer
- 3) laitton maahanmuutto = illegal immigration
- 4) raja kiinni = close border
- 5) poistaa maa = remove country
- 6) laittomasti maa = illegally country
- 7) karkoittaa maa = deport country
- 8) palauttaa kotimaa = return homecountry
- 9) laitton siirtolainen = illegal immigrant
- 10) laittomasti Suomi = illegally Finland

We then collected all addresses by Finnish MPs to the parliamentary floor during the six-month timeframe of the second episode of contention, discarding all the addresses where none of the above bigrams feature. This way we established the corpus of 26 addresses to the parliamentary floor by 22 Finish MPs from six parties; containing a total of 27205 words, issued in 10 plenary sessions. The table below presents the corpus used for the analysis of the second set of contention.

**Table 2:** List of articles selected for the qualitative analysis of the second episode of contention

Session	Member of Parliament	Party
9.2.2016/a	Ilkka Kantola	The Social Democratic Party /SD
9.2.2016/b	Sari Essayah	The Christian Democrats /CD
11.2.2016/a	Ben Zyskowitz	The National Coalition /NC
11.2.2016/b	Mika Niikko	The Finns Party /F
11.2.2016/c	Mika Raatikainen	The Finns Party /F
11.2.2016/d	Olli-Poika Parviainen	The Greens Party /G
11.2.2016/e	Reijo Hongisto	The Finns Party /F
11.2.2016/f	Teuvo Hakkarainen	The Finns Party /F
11.2.2016/g	Timo Heinonen	The National Coalition /NC
11.2.2016/h	Veera Ruoho	The Finns Party /F
11.2.2016/i	Ville Tavio	The Finns Party /F
1.3.2016/a	Ben Zyskowitz	The National Coalition /NC
1.3.2016/b	Hannakaisa Heikkinen	The Centre Party /C
1.3.2016/c	Juho Eerola	The Finns Party /F
1.3.2016/d	Leena Meri	The Finns Party /F
10.3.2016	Juha Sipilä	The Centre Party /C
12.4.2016	Mika Kari	The Social Democratic Party /SD
27.4.2016	Tytti Tuppurainen	The Social Democratic Party /SD
24.5.2016/a	Lea Mäkipää	The Finns Party /F
24.5.2016/b	Mika Niikko	The Finns Party /F
24.5.2016/c	Mika Raatikainen	The Finns Party /F
24.5.2016/d	Sami Savio	The Finns Party /F
24.5.2016/e	Teuvo Hakkarainen	The Finns Party /F
8.6.2016	Anna Kontula	The Left Alliance /LA
15.6.2016	Ville Tavio	The Finns Party /F
21.6.2016	Ville Niinistö	The Greens Party /G

#### 1.4 Research questions

Through statistical analysis of keyword frequencies, computer-assisted sampling and qualitative analysis of the two corpora (with Atlas.TI), the national report will address two main research questions, separately for each of the episodes of contention:

- a) Episode 1 (May – November 2015): How is the question of responsibility politicized in the mainstream media reporting on the Common European Asylum System (CEAS)?
- b) Episode 2 (January – June 2016): How do the Finnish parliamentarians politicize the question of responsibility for irregular migration in the aftermath of the ‘refugee crisis’?

## 2. Overview of the main debates

The public debate on asylum in 2015 was characterized by a discussion of how Finland should control the unprecedented increase in the number of asylum seekers. The topics of the debate were also to a larger extent than previously influenced by populist politics. The Finnish national contact point for the European Migration Network (EMN) carries out a media monitoring of the public debate on

immigration. According to the EMN's *Annual Report on Migration and Asylum*, the debate in the year 2015 was "characterised by the increase of populist activity and the polarised dialogue on immigration" (EMN 2016, 14). Furthermore, the report regarded the dialogue as being carried out at an abstract level without concrete proposals for solutions (Pyrhönen 2015b; EMN 2016, 15).

In the public dialogue, the most active political party was considered by the EMN to be the Finns party, who already before the parliamentary election in 2015 had published an immigration policy programme that invoked a great deal of public debate (EMN 2016, 16). The key elements of this programme concerned the restriction of asylum and family reunification policy and costs incurred by immigration. The programme also used rhetoric that continued to play a key role in the public dialogue on immigration later in 2015 (EMN 2017, 16). The Finns Party included a vociferous so called "immigration-critical" faction and the party demanded restrictive immigration policies in general. The relatively strong electoral mobilization of the party had capitalized on an explicit nationalist and Eurosceptic rhetoric already in the 2011 parliamentary elections (Pyrhönen 2015a).

The public debate in Finland has to be understood in light of the fact that a brand-new coalition government was formed in spring 2015, which included the Eurosceptic and populist Finns Party, the agrarian Centre Party, and the conservative National Coalition Party. This new political constellation in Finnish politics made it necessary for the government to internally negotiate new political compromises on immigration, refugee, and EU policy issues. Some elements of the Finns party immigration programme was included in the official government programme that was agreed on in early 2015. During the election campaign in early 2015, the Finns Party explicitly opposed the policy of so-called "burden sharing" within the EU. This opposition continued in the government and the party was able to include its position in the official government programme. The programme explicitly states that the "relocation of asylum seekers within the EU should be based on the voluntary participation of Member States" (Government of Finland 2015, 36), and unlike previous government programmes it did not mention a support for a common EU asylum and immigration policy. As the leader of the Finns Party, and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Timo Soini declared in his blog: "Every state is responsible for the asylum seekers in its own territory. The decision-making power must be in national hands. Decision-making power in migration policy should not be moved to the Commission" (Soini 2015, translated from Finnish by ÖW). Although policy changes tend to happen relatively slowly in Finland, the new government represented a different line on immigration and asylum from previous Finnish governments. This also explains why the Finnish Minister of the Interior abstained from voting when the EU relocation decision was taken on 22 September 2015 (20 member states voted yes, 4 voted no (Romania, Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary), leaving Finland as the only member state that abstained from voting) (Wahlbeck 2018).

According to the monitoring of printed media, conducted by the Finnish national contact point for the EMN, the increase of immigration-related news had been substantial starting from late July, declining slightly towards the end of the year 2015—a trend that corresponds with the number of asylum seekers (EMN 2016; 2017). In 2016, when the number of asylum seekers took a clear downward turn, immigration-related news also decreased "and the dialogue calmed down slightly from the previous year" (EMN 2017, 15). In the autumn of 2015, the asylum seeker situation became one of the leading topics in the news (EMN 2016, 41). In 2016, a majority of the immigration-related news were still related to asylum, but family reunification and "irregular migrants" (a term used by EMN) also came up as topics in the media (EMN 2017, 15). In early 2016, the asylum seekers entering Finland from Russia, which was a new route, was featured in the news (EMN 2017, 44). According to interviews conducted

for this project with senior public servants<sup>2</sup>, the realisation that a major influx of asylum seekers may happen also across the Schengen border with Russia, made many Finnish politicians change their mind in favour of an agreed share of responsibility among the EU member states.

Various views on the asylum seekers' effects on the economy and the employment situation in Finland was expressed in the media. "It is feared that asylum seekers and persons who have been issued with a residence permit are a burden to the Finnish social security system and further impairs unemployment" (EMN 2016, 41). This particular fear echoes the results from the Eurobarometer surveys, where the Finnish respondents regard unemployment as the most important issue facing the country in both 2015 and 2016 (Glorius 2018). This also relates to the general observation on public opinions made by Birgit Glorius (2018, 10–11); in societies where few experiences with migrants were made, economic and social security systems are unstable and where low level of interpersonal and institutional trust is present, hostility attitudes develop towards immigration in general and asylum migration in particular.

An indication of the heated and polarised debate is that, in printed media in Finland, hate speech was a constant news topic from the beginning of August 2015 to the end of the year, while early in 2015 this topic made the headlines only occasionally (EMN 2016, 16). In the media, the need for Finland to take a larger responsibility was also expressed. The planned refugee resettlement quota for 2016 was dropped back to 750 persons, which invoked discussions in the editorials in several newspapers, expressing concern for forgetting the most distressed groups as the number of asylum seekers increased (EMN 2016, 42). The opening of new reception centres drew much media attention in 2015. "During the most intense period of the establishment of new reception centres in early autumn, newspapers constantly published news about new reception centres, the locations of intended reception centres and the decisions municipalities had made regarding the establishment of reception centres" (EMN 2016, 45).

At the time of writing, one of the few academic analyses of the Finnish news reporting during the so-called "crisis", is an article by Annu Perälä and Mari K. Niemi (2018), who examine the choice of interviewees and discussion topics made by the Finnish national broadcasting company YLE in the period August 2015 – February 2016. In this period, the asylum seeker situation received a remarkable level of coverage and the analysis includes 266 of YLE's magazine programmes. The authors conclude that the "crisis" was overwhelmingly understood as one of Finnish society and of EU decision making, rather than as a humanitarian crisis (Perälä and Niemi 2018, 1). It was a crisis of those receiving asylum seekers, not of the asylum seekers themselves. The arrival of asylum seekers was the most common topic discussed, while also EU-level and national decision making was relatively widely debated. The societal consequences of the crisis and integration issues also featured, but the core reasons and wider context of the crisis was very seldom a topic. The choice of interviewees and the use of sources was elite-driven. 70 percent of the interviewees were elite actors: journalists, politicians, officials and other experts (Perälä and Niemi 2018, 6). The interviewees were predominantly men and belonged to the

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<sup>2</sup> The interviews for Work Package 2 in this project included non-standardised questions on harmonisation. A senior civil servant at a Finnish government agency explained this development in an interview: "Politicians also seemed to start to change the way they think about this. Decisive was the autumn of 2015 when also the arrivals across the border with Russia started to rise. Politicians started to realise that this is not an isolated haven [*lontukoto*], also Finland may be the receiver of a mass influx of asylum seekers and in principle we are then solely responsible for all of them. Thus, politicians started to change their view on a sharing of responsibilities" (WP2\_UH\_E004\_P).

ethnic majority. In terms of academic experts, YLE mostly relied on previously known academic sources, predominantly from the Finnish Institute of Foreign Affairs. The voices of asylum seekers were practically absent, leading Perälä and Niemi to conclude “that YLE’s dedication to cultural exchange and diversity is not fulfilled in its content” (Perälä and Niemi 2018, 12). These results are in line with comparable studies, conducted in other EU member states on the media coverage and framing of the ‘refugee crisis’ in 2015, which have found that a process of securitization took place, little attention was given to the context of the ‘crisis’ and there was a limited scope for migrant or refugee voices being represented (Consterdine 2018, 16–20).

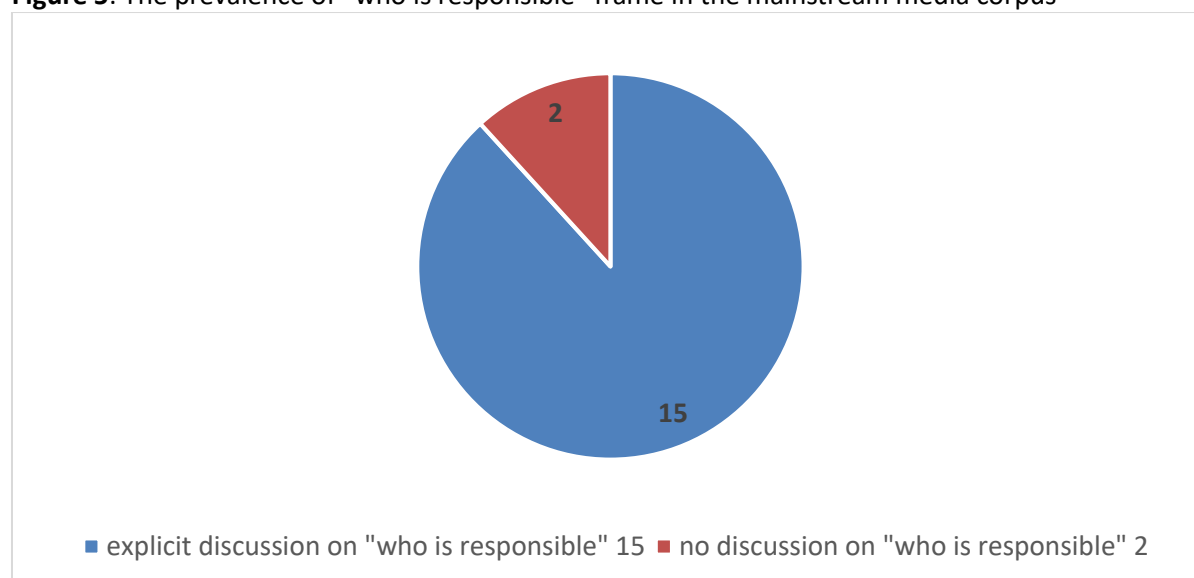
### 3. The first episode of contention (May – November 2015): Analysis of the politicization of refugee quotas in mainstream media

The overview of the main debates presented above indicates that there is a need to analyse the process of politicisation as it unfolds in the media and develops into concrete issues in the arena of politics. The 17 newspaper articles selected for qualitative analysis were distributed within the timeframe of analysis (figure 4) along a roughly similar pattern to the 127 articles in the complete data set (figure 3). As a result, the topics that feature in the 17 articles are the same: the possibility of the discussion on the possibility of the relocation quota in May, the 40000 refugees to be relocated from Italy and Greece in June, and the domestic and the EU level strife concerning the eventual agreement and its projected outcomes in September. This analysis begins in a discussion of the prevalence “responsibility” as framing in the corpus, and is followed by separate analyses on, firstly, who is presented as the responsible party in the debates, and, secondly, on who are these parties presented as responsible to.

#### 3.1 The prevalence of responsibility frames in the mainstream media corpus

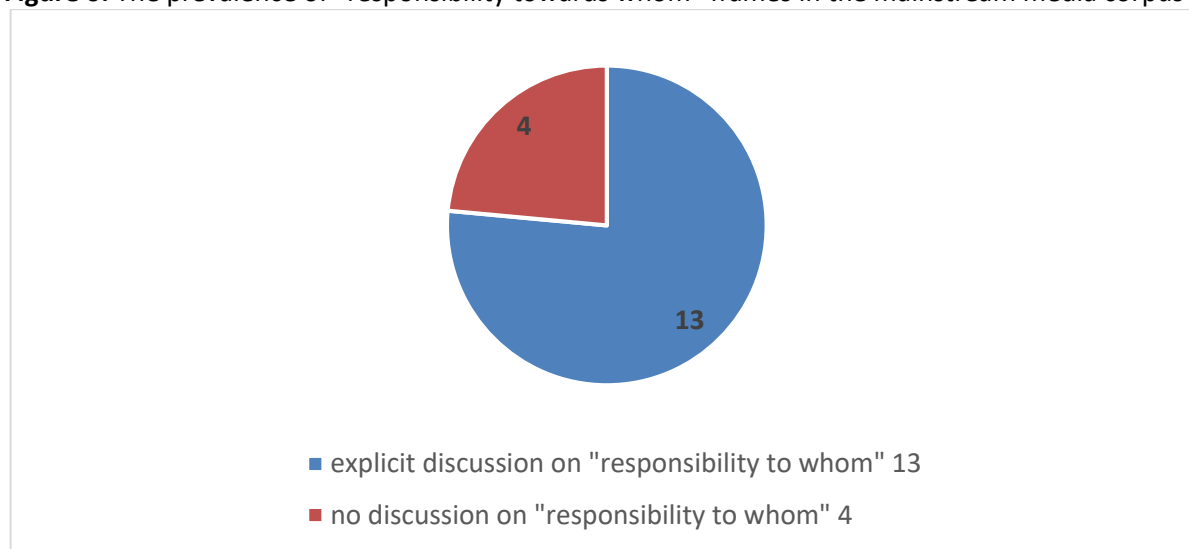
One of the immediate findings in the mainstream media corpus is that discussions on refugee quota revolves around the question of “who is responsible” for the management of the ‘refugee crisis.’ Out of 17 articles selected for qualitative analysis, only two articles do not explicitly address this question. These two articles mainly focus on describing either the scale and the volumes of asylum seekers the ‘refugee crisis’ entails, or on the strife among member states for the proposed policy solutions.

**Figure 5:** The prevalence of “who is responsible” frame in the mainstream media corpus



The great majority of articles that make use of the “who is responsible” frame (and both of the two that do not) also address the question of “responsibility towards whom.” Even so, the “who is responsible” frame is more prevalent than the “responsibility towards whom” frame. Four articles do not address the latter dimension at all, but rather focus on presenting the scale and strife dimensions inherent to managing the ‘refugee crisis’ on the EU-level, or illustrate sc. *Visegrád* countries’ dissatisfaction to what they perceive as EU’s use of compulsion in forcing them to adopt specific relocation quotas.

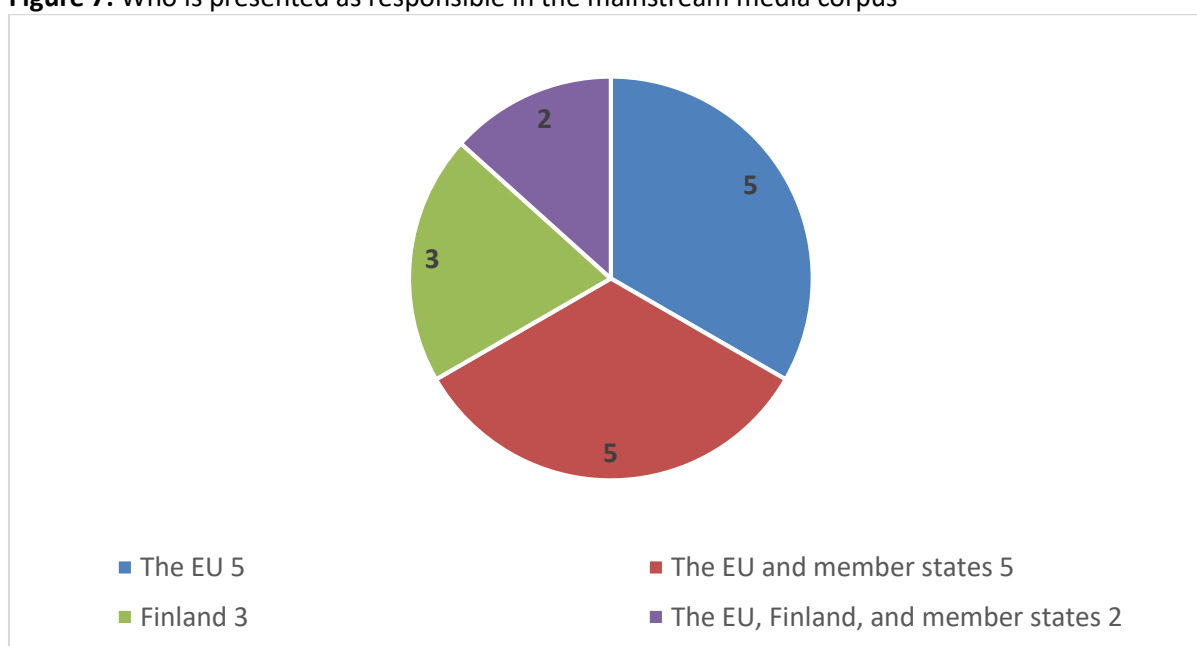
**Figure 6:** The prevalence of “responsibility towards whom” frames in the mainstream media corpus



### 3.2 Who is presented as responsible, and for what?

In the 15 news articles that make use of the “who is responsible” frame, the responsibility for the management of the ‘refugee crisis’ is attributed to three key players: the EU, member states, and Finland. About half (7) of the articles present responsibility as intersecting between two or more parties, while the other half of the articles (8) focus on the responsibility of an individual actor.

**Figure 7:** Who is presented as responsible in the mainstream media corpus



Interestingly, none of the articles addresses the question of responsibility of municipalities, NGOs or asylum seekers themselves. One explanation for the articles focusing solely on the national and European high-political arena and international relations is that the articles approach the question of responsibility from the point of view of policy mechanisms for managing the ‘refugee crisis.’

### 3.2.1 The EU (13/15 articles)

The passages presenting EU as responsible commonly emphasize how the EU must find a way to maintain internal cohesion by negotiating between divergent interests of the member states. This narrative is rather sceptical in nature, typically pointing to instances where specific member states’ interest are in conflict – often through quoting or paraphrasing *Visegrád* countries’ acrimonious representatives:

*According to Reuters, the Slovakian Prime Minister Robert Fico, wasted no time in announcing that Slovakia would not implement quotas as long as he is the Prime Minister. (HS 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2015)*

*The Prime Minister of Hungary Victor Orbán has called the plan “crazy and unfair.” (HS 16<sup>th</sup> May 2015)*

Another common type of narrative underlining the responsibility of the EU relies on arguments of institutional legitimacy that emphasize the importance of adopting voluntary mechanisms for relocation of refugees between member states. Such passages question the legal status of any non-voluntary measures for implementing relocation quotas:

*The opponents of the commission’s proposal have doubted whether there are requisite legal grounds for compulsory relocation. (HS 14<sup>th</sup> May 2015)*

*According to [chairman of the Finnish National Coalition party Alexander] Stubb, the new government’s point of departure is that the majority decision of the EU-countries cannot compel the opposing member states to receive asylum seekers from other member states. (HS 16<sup>th</sup> May 2015)*

### 3.2.2 Member states (8/15 articles)

Among the most common narratives for addressing member states’ responsibilities pertains to solidarity towards the EU by participating and cooperating in the implementation of its refugee and relocation quotas. However, participation is not only referred to as “a responsibility to solidarity”, but also explicitly as “burden” and “burden sharing” by politicians, EU officials and the authors of the news articles independently. For example, several articles that address the possibility of exemptions from receiving refugees also underline that in such cases it is the member states’ responsibility to convince the EU and other member states of their adequately exceptional justification for not carrying common burden:

*According to an EU source interviewed by [Helsingin Sanomat], the EU countries can request permission to be temporarily exempt from burden sharing if they are “facing serious problems.” [...] “Unwillingness to receive Muslims is not an acceptable justification”, said an EU source who is well versed in [the Commission’s] proposal. (HS 9<sup>th</sup> September 2015)*

Another key narrative that emphasises member states’ “burden of responsibility” focuses on the financial costs that incur from receiving refugees.



Quoting anonymous “EU sources” and the Commission, such passages emphasize that the member states are to be made responsible for taking in their fair share of refugees, calculated with regard to indicators outlined by the EU:

*Should a member state get an exemption to temporarily avoid taking refugees, the country will have to pay compensation to the EU budget. The compensation goes to the countries that receive refugees in their stead [...] For now, it remains unclear how much a member state would have to pay in compensations for the right to temporarily withdraw from the system. “We don’t want to put a price tag to human beings,” says an EU source. (HS 9<sup>th</sup> September 2015)*

*[Italy and Greece] require more financial support from EU countries in order to deal with the situation. If EU cannot agree on a common guideline, the countries will increasingly make independent solutions. Already now there are signs that the results of straying from a common guideline are not good. (HS 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2015)*

### 3.2.3 Finland (5/15 articles)

The articles discussing Finland’s responsibility for managing the ‘refugee crisis’ emphasize Finland’s reputation as a small country on an international arena in general, and within the EU in particular. The concern for the reputation of Finland is most commonly narrated by politicians:

*The decision was made in the governmental negotiations that Finland maintains its refugee quota on previous years’ level. This goes to show that Finland carries its responsibility for international responsibility sharing, said the chairman of the Finns party Timo Soini. (HS 14<sup>th</sup> May 2015)*

*Finland’s share is quite high, because Finland has increased its refugee quota from 750 to 1050 due to the Syrian crisis. “Relative to population, Finland is among the leading countries in refugee reception,” said Stubb. (HS 16<sup>th</sup> May 2015)*

On the other hand, when Finland abstained from voting on relocation, the journalists voiced concerns for how this will impact Finland’s reputation, while the politicians sought to depoliticize the issue as business as usual:

*The Prime minister Petteri Orpo (NC) told that Finland has kept the others informed of its position and conjectured that abstaining will not leave a too big stain. This is about politics where the impact cannot be measure in metres or litres, but the decision certainly left a mark. Finland’s actions were widely reported, and it will haunt in several political contexts. (HS 24<sup>th</sup> September 2015)*

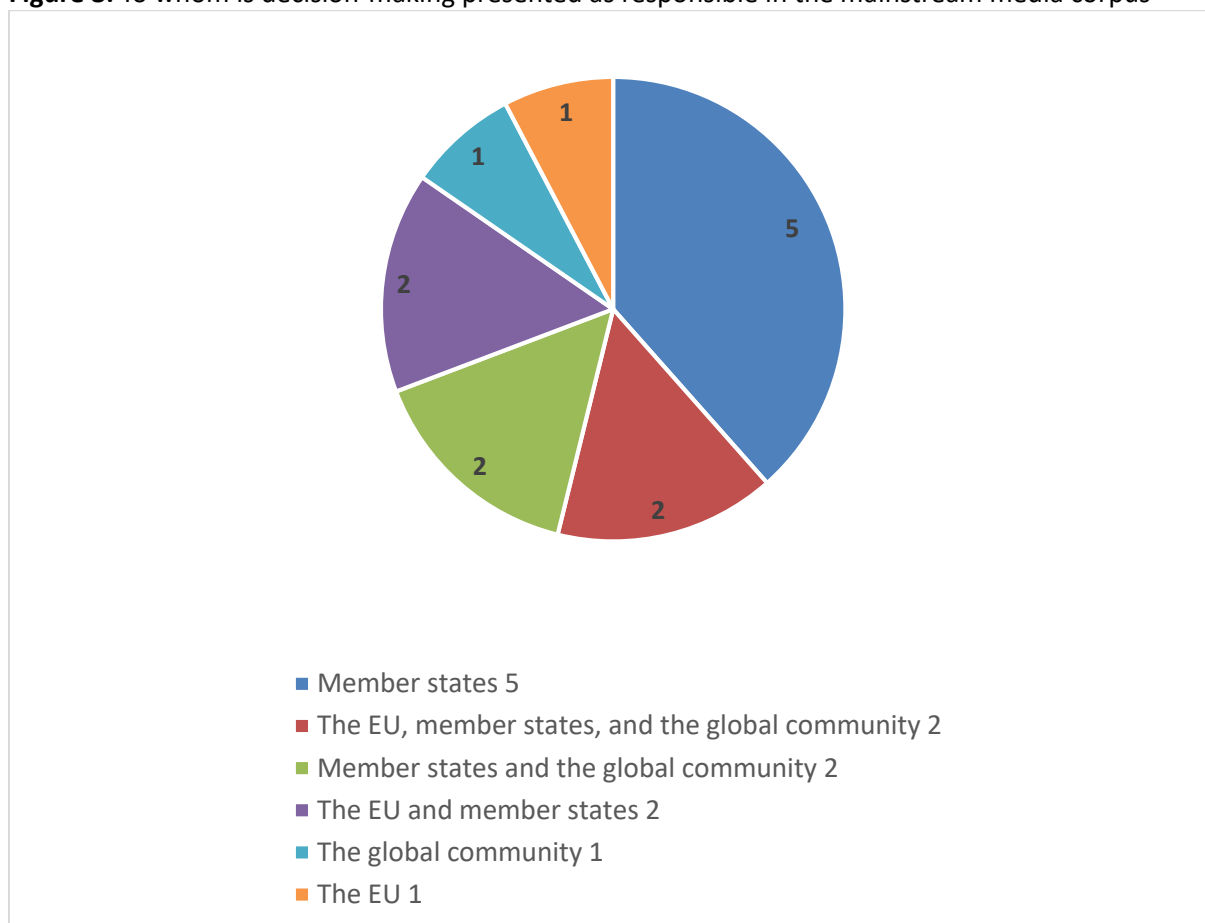
### 3.3 To whom is decision-making presented as responsible?

In addition to the EU and member states, the responsibility for global community features high in the 13 articles in the corpus where the “responsibility to whom” frame occurs. On the other hand, Finland in particular is not presented as a specific party, but its interests and rights are addressed in the context of responsibility to member states in general.

Similarly to the 15 articles making use of the “responsibility of” frame, nearly half (6) of the 13 articles where the “responsibility to whom” frame features present an intersecting constellation of responsibility recipients whose rights and interests tend to be in conflict. However, responsibility to member states is something of an exception to this pattern, it being commonly (5) discussed separately

from other responsibility recipients. Moreover, unlike in the case of the EU and the global community, responsibility to member states is a framing that features in almost each of the articles (11).

**Figure 8:** To whom is decision-making presented as responsible in the mainstream media corpus



### 3.3.1 The EU (5/13 articles)

While the EU is the agent that is most commonly presented as responsible for the management of the ‘refugee crisis’, the EU (together with the global community) is the least commonly featuring recipient of responsibility in the 13 articles. The most typical narrative articulating the responsibility to the EU focuses on the member states who fail to implement the EU’s guidelines, and the measures the EU considers for further enforcing cooperation:

*Scolding for the unruly. The Commission gave a warning to 19 member states for not adhering to common legislation on asylum. The warning was also issued to Germany, who has opened doors for asylum seekers. If the member states do not start implementing common guidelines, including the registration of asylum seekers, they will face sanctions. (HS 24<sup>th</sup> September 2015).*

In addition, certain member states’ responsibilities to the EU are narrated as a reciprocal obligation for benefitting from the EU’s relocation quotas:

*The Commission has suggested that the 40000 asylum seekers who have arrived in Italy and Greece should be shared between other member states during the next two years. Reciprocally, Italy and Greece must increase their efforts in registering migrants and in assessing the need for asylum. (HS 26<sup>th</sup> June 2015).*

### 3.3.2 Member states (11/13 articles)

Member states are typically presented in the corpus as entitled to fair and impartial treatment, both from the EU and from other member states. In the case of the former, the responsibility to member states entails, firstly, an approach that respects sovereignty by avoiding compulsion with regard to any quota mechanisms to be implemented by the member states, and secondly, material support from the EU:

*When EU countries divulge national powers to the EU level, the decisions are always based on member states' consent. [...] The acceptability of refugee reception is already contested in many countries. Compulsion would further reduce its legitimacy.* (HS 12<sup>th</sup> September 2015).

*Member states can also ask for help in managing the refugee problem from the EU's civil protection mechanism that can distribute, for example, tents, medical aid, or experts.* (HS 12<sup>th</sup> September 2015).

Responsibility to member states also means establishing a context-sensitive approach and member state specific indicators for deciding what the fair and feasible refugee quota would be:

*In the Commission's quota calculations, each country's share is affected by four considerations: member state's population, gross domestic product, the number of asylum seekers already in the country, and the member state's unemployment rate.* (HS 14<sup>th</sup> May 2015).

In addition to responsibilities of the EU, responsibility to member states frame also incorporates discussion on what responsibilities do specific EU countries have to other member states, underlining certain unacceptable practices by Greece and Italy, for example:

*At the moment, other EU countries do not return asylum seekers to Greece because of dismal conditions of reception. Greek, for its part, redirects refugees forward [to other member states] without registering them.* (HS 24<sup>th</sup> September 2015).

Notwithstanding the narrative emphasizing these countries' breaches in implementing EU asylum policy, the other member states are still considered responsible to show them solidarity, even though the exact nature of the solidarity measures is consistently portrayed as a highly contested issue:

*Finland and the other EU countries are prepared to help Italy and Greece with their migratory pressures, but on a voluntary basis. [...] "We do not have a consensus among the member states on compulsory refugee quotas", said Donald Tusk, the Polish chairman of the European Council upon entering the meeting.* (HS 26<sup>th</sup> June 2015).

### 3.3.3 The global community (5/13 articles)

The EU's and member states' responsibility to the global community is typically presented as a relatively abstract principle that justifies imposing and accepting the 'burden' of responsibility for refugees. In many passages, this responsibility is presented as conditional to an individual's 'real' need and deservingness of asylum, over which several passages express doubts:

*Thousands who have sought to get to Europe via the Mediterranean have drowned during their flight. "Everyone who needs asylum from Europe should get one. But those without a justified reason for applying for asylum should be quickly identified and repatriated. This is essential in order to immigration politics becoming acceptable in civil society", stated Frans Timmerman, the vice-chairman of the Commission.* (HS 28<sup>th</sup> May 2015).

Another considerations narrated as limiting the responsibility to the global community are related to national sovereignty and the global scale of people potentially in need of asylum:

*A vision has been presented, according to which our country takes in tens of thousands of refugees annually, and hundreds of thousands in the future. Is Finland no longer a sovereign state that decides for itself how many and which people will be taken in here? [...] I do not deny the justification and necessity of the refugee agreement. But when only Iraq's population is 30 million, and Finland's 5,5 million, the result is an untenable disparity between the supply and the demand.* (HS 28<sup>th</sup> September 2015).

Some passages, however, assert that the responsibility to the global community entails rethinking, and ultimately abandoning the problem frame of global migration, and instead adopting a realist, up-to-date political approach:

*[William Swing, the director of IOM] says he does not dream of a world without borders as "it would never break through." According to him, the politics of migration is, however, stuck somewhere in the past. "Migration is not a problem to be solved, but a reality to be managed."* (HS 13<sup>th</sup> May 2015).

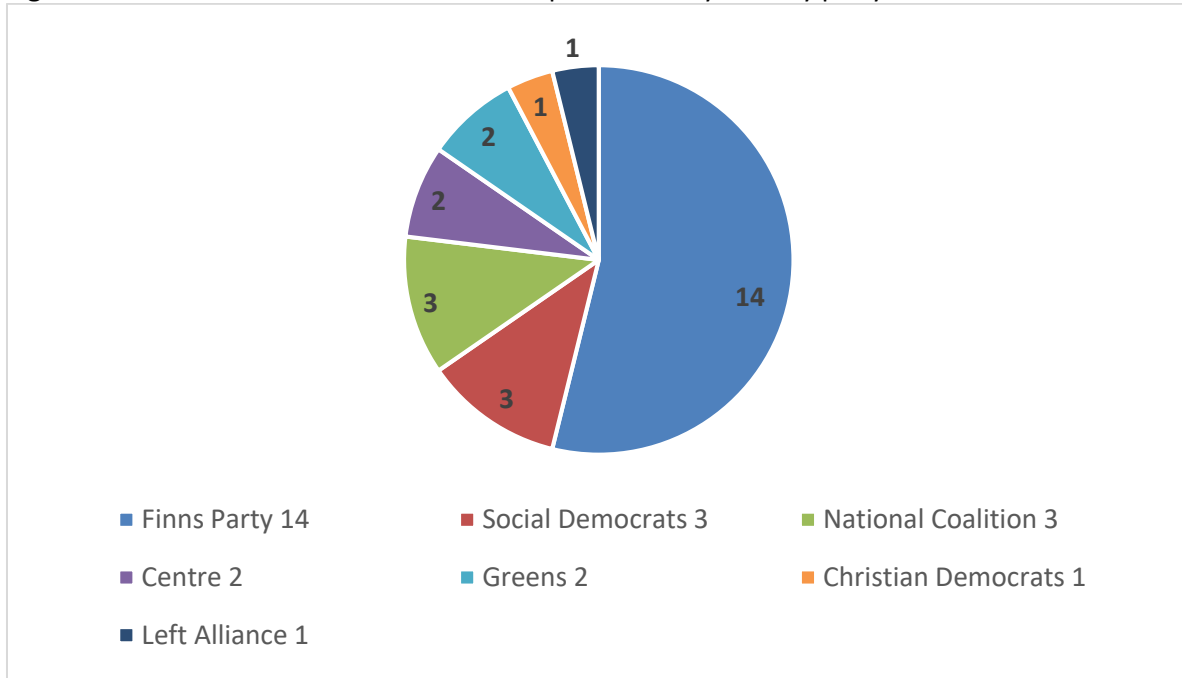
#### **4. The second episode of contention (January – June 2016): Analysis of the politicization of irregular migration in Finnish parliamentary debates**

The second episode of contention we chose to analyse takes place in the aftermath of the 'refugee crisis' and the pertinent EU-level decision-making on refugee and relocation quotas. Being part of the newly established coalition government, the right-wing populist Finns party had succeeded in making Finland abstain from the relocation quota vote. The agreement was nevertheless reached, and the Finns party felt continued to politicize asylum related issues. A possible rationale for this can be linked to the party's endeavour to convince its voter base of the dedication to the anti-immigration political agenda which recently contributed to the Finns' political success and governmental position (Pyrhönen 2015a; Hatakka 2016).

As explicated in the data and methods section, several parliamentary sessions began to revolve around the question of 'illegal' status of the asylum seekers. This became a central narrative frame the Finns party made use to re-politicize the already established mechanisms for managing the 'refugee crisis' and its implications, particularly vis-à-vis irregular migration. However, almost one half of the 26 addresses to the floor were by MPs from other parties (figure 9), who typically sought to either challenge 'the illegality narrative' or depoliticize the government's measures for controlling immigration.

This analysis begins in a discussion of the prevalence "responsibility" as framing in the corpus, and is followed by separate analyses on, firstly, who is presented as the responsible party in the debates, and, secondly, on who are these parties presented as responsible to.

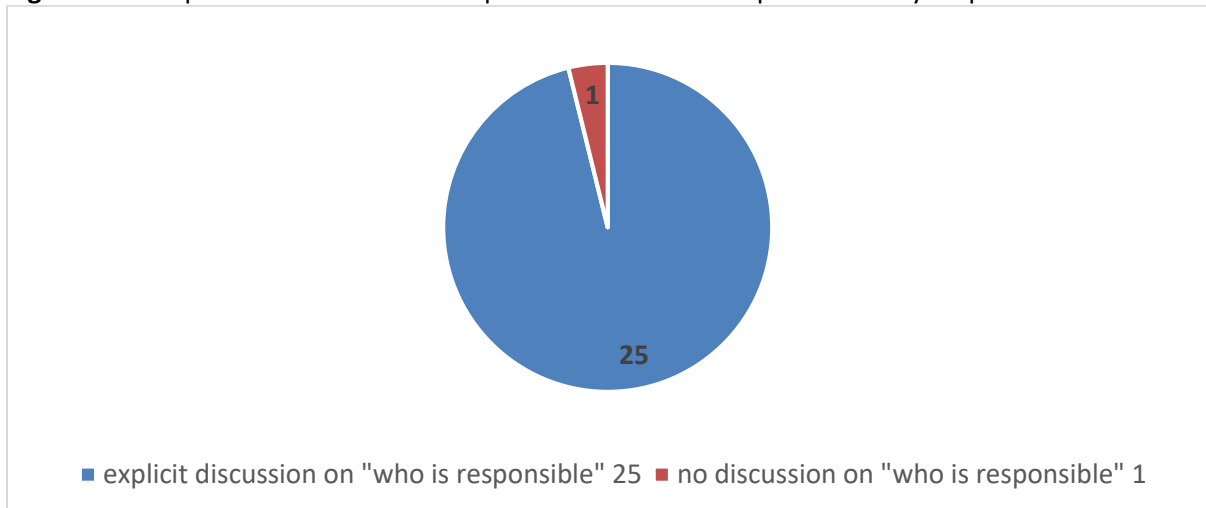
**Figure 9:** The distribution of addresses to the parliamentary floor by party



#### 4.1 The prevalence of responsibility frames in the parliamentary debates corpus

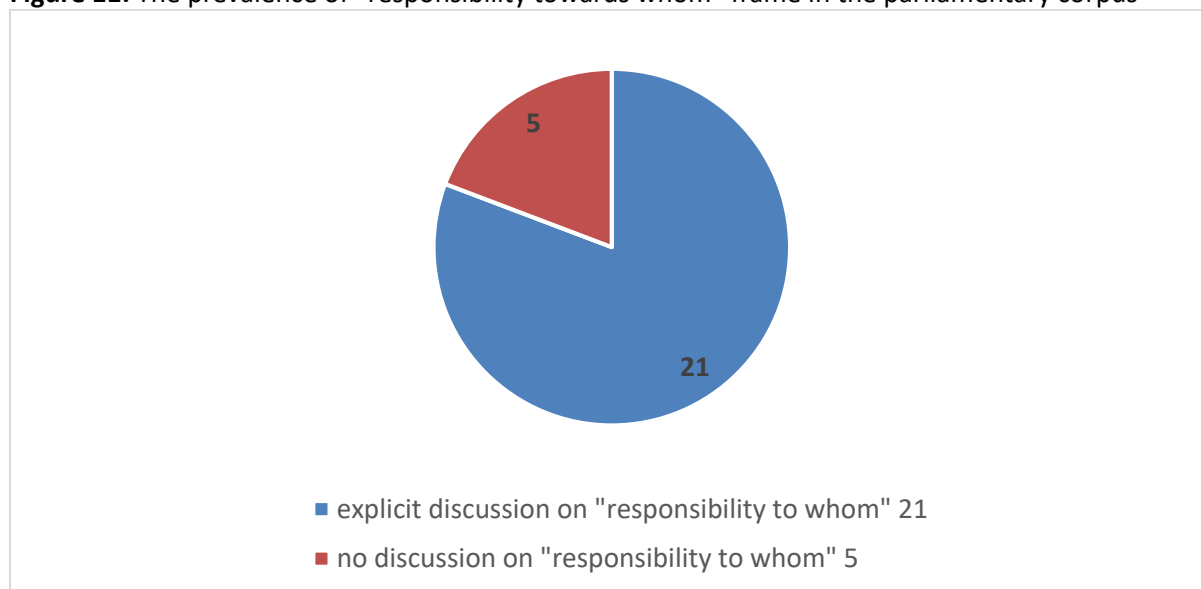
Like in the mainstream media corpus, the use of responsibility frames was prevalent and even slightly more common in the parliamentary debates. Indeed, only one out of the 26 addresses to the parliamentary floor did not employ the “who is responsible” frame (figure 10). This address (Leena Meri /F, 1.3.2016/d) instead focused on the practical hurdles in implementing health care for asylum seekers.

**Figure 10:** The prevalence of “who is responsible” frame in the parliamentary corpus



In comparison to the “who is responsible” frame, the prevalence of the “responsibility to whom” frame was slightly lower. Even so, over 75% of the addresses discussed this dimension, a nearly exactly the same proportion of the parliamentary corpus as is the case of the mainstream media corpus. In addition to the abovementioned address by Leena Meri, the four other addresses not employing the “responsibility to whom” frame (figure 11) dealt with the national economy (Ilkka Kantola /SD, 9.2.2016/a), denial of racism (Sari Essayah /CD, 9.2.2016/b), anti-crime measures (Veera Ruoho /F, 11.2.2016/h) and national security (Ville Tavio /F, 15.6.2016).

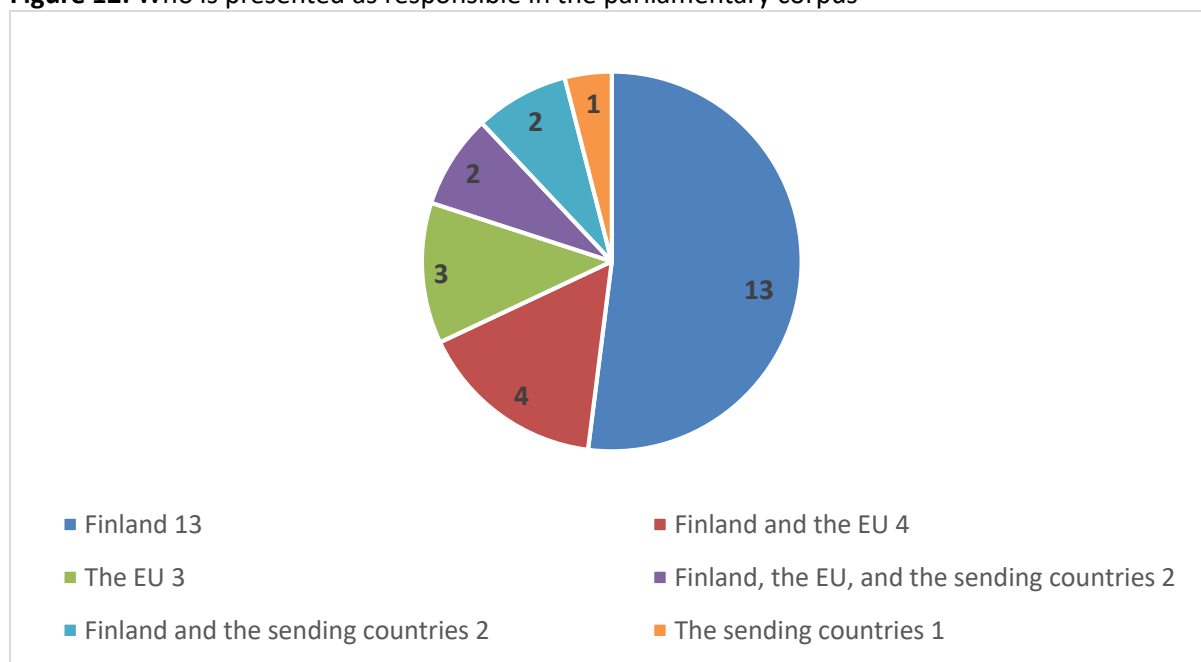
**Figure 11:** The prevalence of “responsibility towards whom” frame in the parliamentary corpus



#### 4.2 Who is presented as responsible, and for what?

Unlike in the mainstream media corpus, where responsibility for the CEAS was presented as an intersecting constellation mainly revolving around the EU, the parliamentary debates on irregular migration focused heavily on Finland’s responsibility. The distribution of “responsibility of” frames is remarkably focused on Finland’s responsibility (21) in comparison to the mainstream media corpus. This is not very surprising, considering the national context of this high-political arena. What is remarkable, however, is that over half of the addresses (13) only considered Finland’s own responsibility, without seeking to link their considerations for responsibility to other key players, the EU (9) and the sending countries (5), that were named in the other addresses to the parliamentary floor in the corpus (figure 12). The overrepresentation of the Finns party MPs in the corpus largely accounts for the heavy focus Finland’s individual responsibility, as their addresses comprise over two thirds (9) of the addresses that solely discuss Finland’s responsibility (13).

**Figure 12:** Who is presented as responsible in the parliamentary corpus



Another interesting finding in the parliamentary debates is that relatively few addresses (9) present the EU as responsible for the “illegal refugees” in Finland. The Finns party MPs, in particular, appear to take a departure in their addresses from the party’s longstanding rhetoric of presenting the EU as a major source of Finland’s problems. Although in the public debate, the Finns party has often suggested that other member states seek to “dump” asylum seekers in Finland (Pyrhönen 2013), in the corpus the other member states do not feature in the corpus as a responsible party. Instead, the responsibility of the sending countries, completely absent in the mainstream media corpus, is mentioned in six addresses to the parliamentary floor.

#### 4.2.1 Finland (21/25 addresses)

Finland’s responsibility for “illegal refugees” is most commonly discussed with reference to crime, safety and distribution of limited resources. These frames for narrating responsibility can be found almost exclusively in addresses that focus on the responsibility of Finnish politicians and authorities:

*The current politics of asylum threatens Finns’ safety [...] Ensuring safety belongs in the state’s key responsibilities. That requires resources. [...] We must continue acting responsibly, regardless of the economic situation.* (Mika Niikko /F, 24.5.2016/b)

*In Sweden, masses of police officers are resigning, and I not surprised by at all, considering how immigrants gangs are starting to take control of whole districts and govern them with fear and violence. The authorities have lost the game there. [...] Personally I have nothing against groups such as [the extremist vigilante] Soldiers of Odin. They ensure safety as the police cannot do it at the moment.* (Teuvo Hakkarainen /F, 24.5.2016/e)

Most of the addresses, especially those coming from the Finn’s party MPs, do not discuss the causal mechanisms through which the Finnish asylum policy is responsible for the alleged lack of safety, let alone suggest how specific policies – beyond summary deportations – would actually remedy the situation. This is often criticized by MPs from other parties, pointing out that the responsibility of Finland entails developing implementable policy solutions, even with regard to deportations:

*[With deportations] there happens to be the little problem that deporting functions so that there must be someone to receive. You cannot just dump to a country X. That is the problem. Why would the neighbouring countries receive a person who they consider a threat? [...] As I said, in Finland we do not have a death sentence. In Finland, we do not practice torture. So, why would we do so that we send people to die or to be tortured?* (Olli-Poika Parviainen /G, 11.2.2016/d)

The challenges related to undocumented migrants are commonly linked to insufficient resources allocated to Finnish authorities, not only nationally, but also locally. This suggests that MPs invoke the responsibility of Finland for the purpose of politicizing regional electorates’ concerns that touch upon sectors that are only loosely related to migration:

*[T]he number of the personnel responsible for controlling the eastern border is decreasing by 40 percent. As the asylum seekers started flowing last fall from the western border, all incomers could not be registered, and according to the most recent information, about 2500 people who got a negative decision have gone missing already during this year. [...] According to the officials in the Ministry of Interior, maintaining safety will become more difficult in the whole country, particularly in the peripheries. [...] Unlike other authorities of internal safety, the rescue services*

*are mostly funded by the municipalities. In the countryside, people are concerning over the requisitely rapid availability of these services. (Lea Mäkipää /F, 24.5.2016/a)*

MPs also frame Finland's responsibility for "paperless" persons with explicit reference to maintaining the universal principles of the welfare state:

*We have two roads: either we create regulated basis for these people [paperless], or then we accept that the Finnish culture is gradually changing into underhand measures that supersede the official system, because it is clear that these people will not disappear from our countries, and we cannot resolve the issue by expecting that everything stays the same as long as we do not discuss it. (Anna Kontula /LA, 8.8.2016)*

#### 4.2.2 The EU (9/25 addresses)

While the addresses on Finland's responsibility were markedly contested along party political lines, there was much more common ground between the MPs in debates touching the EU's responsibilities. One reason for this is, however, that only one address by the Finns party explicitly focused on the EU as the responsible party. Most discussants agreed that the EU should work towards common practices for managing irregular flows of migrants:

*If I have understood correctly, there is a pretty wide support in these debates for common guidelines in asylum politics within the EU, also among the Green party leadership. (Timo Heinonen /NC, 11.2.2016/g)*

*It is also in Finland's interests that the EU countries do not play against each other in the question of refugees, optimizing their regulations in one country to be stricter than in the other countries. Losers in this game are, in addition to those in need of help, also the whole of the EU, and eventually Finland, too. (Olli-Poika Parviainen /G, 11.2.2016/d)*

Another source for the common ground is the consensus that the EU has failed in the management of the "refugee problem", even though there is a great divergence in which shortcomings are identified as the EU's responsibility:

*Refugees must be helped better near the countries of origins, which is why cutting from humanitarian aid is extremely shortsighted. Asylum seeker relocation within the EU is not the solution. (Sari Essayah /CD, 9.2.2016/b)*

*It is too late to cry after the loss of national security if we are intentionally facilitating illegal migration that has led to really dismal outcomes in the other European countries in the long run. (Mika Niikko /F, 24.5.2016/b)*

#### 4.2.3 The sending countries (5/25 addresses)

Several MPs framed the responsibility for the "refugee crisis" and the subsequent problems to Europe as ultimately belonging to the sending countries. The more moderate addresses underlined this as a reason for Finland, the other member states and the EU to provide support to these countries:

*[T]he refugee crisis obviously demands completely different types of solutions than those we can reach in Finland. Resolving the refugee crisis requires, of course, that crisis countries' situations alleviate. [...] As we are waiting for the actual crisis spots to calm down [...] we agree: the European Union, and Finland as part of it, will provide support via different channels to the*



*countries neighboring the crisis spots where the immense refugee camps are located [...]* (Ben Zyskiewicz /NC, 11.2.2016/a)

The Finns party MPs, however, commonly underlined that what happens to the repatriated people is not on Finland's responsibility, but only on that of the sending countries:

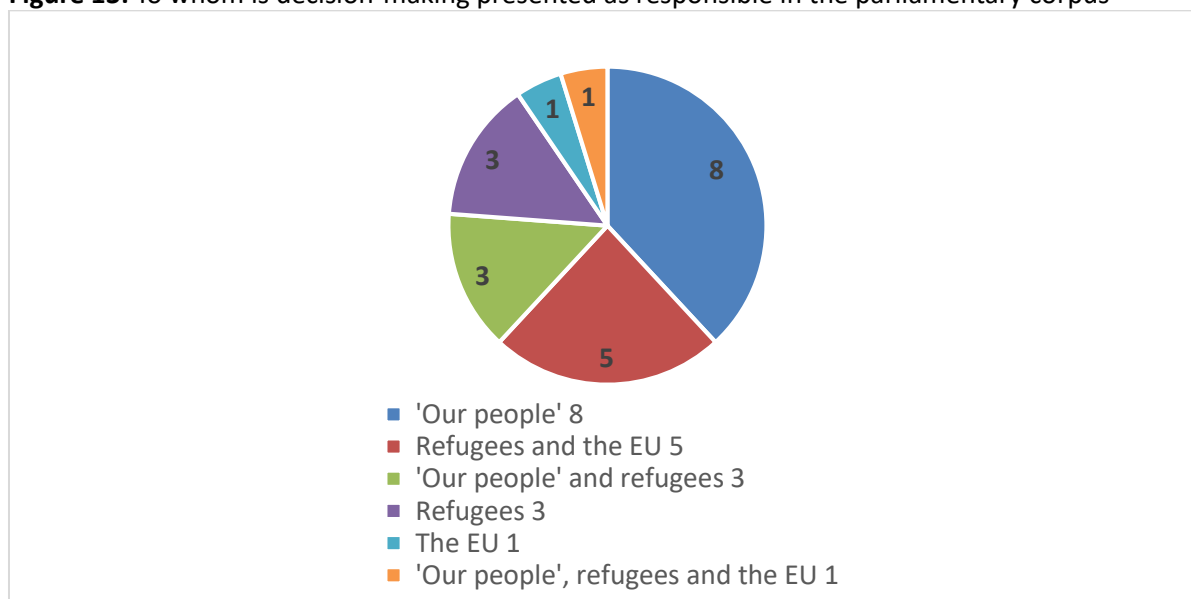
*I have not uttered a word supporting the death penalty or commented on how they will take care of their things in their own countries should a person be deported. I am a representative of the Finnish Parliament and I represent the Finnish people and serve the interests of the Finnish citizens.* (Mika Niikko /F, 11.2.2016/b)

*It is futile to imagine that by allocating resources to education, we will avoid the wave of crime and chaos. Certain nationalities have not been successfully integrated in any country, and will not become integrated here, either. No amount of money or time will suffice when the majority of infiltrators does not want to do in Rome as Romans do. They want to cherry-pick, live on our expenses but by their own rules.* (Teuvo Hakkarainen /F, 11.2.2016/f)

#### 4.3 To whom is decision-making presented as responsible?

Considering how much higher the responsibility of Finland features in comparison to the other responsible parties, it is quite surprising how evenly the “responsibility to” frames are distributed in the parliamentary corpus between ‘our people’ (12), ‘refugees’ (12) and ‘the EU’ (7). However, it is important to note that while a total of eight addresses only articulate responsibility to ‘our people’, only three focus solely on responsibility to ‘refugees’. One interpretation for this is that the concern for ‘refugees’ forms an important narrative resource for the MPs from all parties to justify and legitimize many different types of positions and arguments. Conversely, the addresses using the ‘our people’ responsibility frame are all by the Finns party MPs, save one. Like the responsibility to refugees frame, responsibility to EU tends to be used in conjunction to other responsibility frames and by MPs from many different parties. It appears to be often employed to underline the importance for Finland to “play nice” in the EU and carry its share.

**Figure 13:** To whom is decision-making presented as responsible in the parliamentary corpus



#### 4.3.1 'Our people' (12/21 addresses)

The responsibility for 'our people' frame features particularly high in parliamentary debates on two citizens' initiatives; one on deporting convicted immigrants and the other on removal of humanitarian protection as grounds for asylum in Finnish legislation. These debates are dominated by addresses by the Finns party MPs, who, like in the case of "responsibility of Finland" frame, emphasize the importance of restricting the legislation in order to ensure citizens' safety against violent crime:

*The message is clear. Lawmakers, restrict laws so that we can feel safe in this country.* (Mika Niikko /F, 11.2.2016/b)

*The deportations would also function as excellent cautionary examples, and thereby increase the overall preventive effect of the punishment.* (Reijo Hongisto /F, 11.2.2016/e)

Several of these addresses also question other politicians' commitment to the wellbeing of Finns, which is presented as unfairly and unfeasibly undermined by redistributing "our money" to the asylum seekers:

*Has the green left and this extreme tolerant end of the political spectrum forgotten that when the Aliens Act was created, we were in a totally different situation? [...] people arrive here illegally exactly because the free accommodation and Europe's best social security allures people. [...] A million Chinese will gladly come here and steal all our funds.* (Ville Tavio /F, 11.2.2016/i)

While much of these addresses repeat this narrative, the only address from a non-Finns party MP using this frame challenges the juxtaposition between the interests of the Finns and "the paperless." She points out that in many cases the responsibility to Finns entails measures that also benefit the paperless:

*[T]he earlier we intervene the health problems among the paperless people, the cheaper it is for the Finns, Finland's national economy, national health, overall security, for the population.* (Hanna-Kaisa Heikkinen /C, 1.3.2016/b)

#### 4.3.2 Refugees (12/21 addresses)

Responsibility to refugees is commonly expressed through a narrative that relies on human rights and emotional appeals for refugee children:

*Think how the parents must feel when they know that their children are waiting to reach them, but they are in the camps.* (Ville Niinistö /G, 21.6.2016)

*The purpose [...] is to end the human traffickers' questionable business model that transports people along a dangerous naval route to Greece. The purpose is to end this disorderly business model so that, led by the UNHCR, we can take refugees from the camps in an orderly fashion, women, children and families to be resettled in Europe. [...] Obviously, our point of departure is that we adhere to international agreements and human rights agreements, of course, we cannot act against them as part of the European value community.* (Juha Sipilä /C, 10.3.2016)

To the extent that the Finns party MPs articulate responsibility to refugees, they often frame their support for stricter deportation policy as part of the responsibility towards the allegedly "deserving" immigrants:

*This does not oppress foreigners in any way. On the contrary, this protects the foreigners living in Finland from being labeled as criminals, considering that some of them do commit crimes. [...] They themselves, the asylum seekers who only want to live in this country in accordance to its laws, hope that the legislators would also protect their reputation by punishing those who break these laws. (Mika Niikko /F, 11.2.2016/b)*

#### 4.3.3 The EU (7/21 addresses)

The addresses invoking responsibility to EU are marked by a consensus that is quite rare in the debates on irregular migration. The MPs from all parties using this frame, while disagreeing in many of the substantial issues entailed, emphasize the need to harmonize national legislation between member states:

*The least Finland can do is to facilitate the EU's joint activities that also recognizes the challenges related to environmental refugees and our joint responsibility for it. (Olli-Poika Parviainen /G, 11.2.2016/d)*

While the Finns party MPs do not employ this frame, several MPs from the other parties use it to argue for stricter policies, ostensibly for the benefit of the refugees:

*[W]e must strive to harmonize our practices with regard to the other Nordic countries and the rest of Europe, so that there wouldn't be such a pull factor that, for instance, brings the Iraqi asylum seekers, as we seen, through several countries here in the extreme North, Finland, exactly because they are under impression that in Finland it is easier to get residence permit, in Finland it is easier to also get family reunification. (Ben Zyskiewicz /NC, 11.2.2016/a)*

*But I would also like to focus on all those measures that we could take under the umbrella of the EU or the UN to curb human trafficking. [...] If we only could implement the finding of the real asylum seekers and their safe transport to the EU, I think this would be humane [...] I want to encourage the government of Finland to be an active party in these EU and UN refugee bodies so that we can implement measure for efficient and properly targeted help for refugees. (Hanna-Kaisa Heikkinen /C, 1.3.2016/b)*

## 5. Conclusion

In Finland, the politicization of various immigration-related issues in the aftermath of 'the refugee crisis' was strongly linked the question of responsibility – both in the mainstream media as well as in parliamentary debates. With only a single-digit figure of individual exceptions, all articles and addresses to the parliamentary floor in the two corpora employed responsibility as a key frame to politicize the respective issues: relocation of refugees and irregular migration. While the politicization of responsibility was similarly pronounced in both contexts of political debate, and both corpora emphasised elements of conflict and strife, the actual narratives and patterns of politicization diverged in a significant manner.

The newspaper articles typically narrated the key source of the strife as due to conflicting interests among the member states and the lack of solidarity needed in implementing common EU-level measures for receiving and relocating asylum seekers. This corpus-wide narrative of strife emphasized the responsibility of the EU as whole, underlining the shortcomings in the EU's ability to accommodate conflicting interests of the member states in a non-compulsive manner, evidenced by the strong opposition for any relocation measures in the *Visegrád* countries. The narrative of strife was conveyed

to public through juicy sound bites from high-ranking politicians in member states that expressed outrage, ridicule and intransigent positions towards relocation. Interestingly, the journalists themselves frequently referred to relocation not only as a responsibility, but also explicitly as a “burden.”

Finland, on the other hand, was presented as responsible for maintaining its previously conciliatory reputation as a dependable player in the EU. Finland’s shortcomings in this respect were widely condemned, pointing to the inability to transcend domestic politicking on relocation as a manifestation of the government’s weakness. Responsibility to a global community was sometimes alluded to, but rarely discussed the practical implications of this abstract principle.

In Finland, the politicization of responsibility in the contexts of media and the parliament was successive, rather than parallel. During the first episode of contestation, the minutiae of divisive deliberations between the Finns party and the rest of the Finnish government on Finland’s position vis-à-vis relocation took place behind the cabinet’s closed doors. As such, the politicization of responsibility for relocation was largely confined to the media debates at the time. Overall, notwithstanding the affect-based narrative of strife, the Finnish media debates nevertheless contributed to the formation of public opinion by harnessing a rationalist frame. In the context of mainstream media, the subject-matter of relocation was marked by consistent referencing to the volumes and projected outcomes the European measures for managing the ‘refugee crisis.’

After the agreement on relocation was reached in the EU, and particularly during the first half of the year 2016, the Finns party MPs increased their efforts to politicize the issue in their addresses to the parliamentary floor. This second episode of contention, revolving around the topic of irregular migration, shifted the frame of politicization from instrumentalist considerations to an affects-based frame of cultural identity and “fairness” towards the autochthonous population. These parliamentary debates – dominated by the Finns party, whose addresses consist one half of the second corpus – focused on “illegal refugees.” Accordingly, the debates presented Finnish politicians as ultimately responsible for the allegedly immigration-related phenomena: the dearth of welfare resources, increasing crime and the ensuing erosion of “our people’s” sense of safety. The approach to the EU’s responsibilities in the parliamentary debates was expressed through two distinct narratives. On the one hand, the EU was presented as responsible for letting in “the wave of refugees.” On the other hand, the EU was commonly also invoked in those specific issues where harmonizing Finland’s refugee policy with that of other member states allowed adoption of stricter measures in Finland. The plight of the refugees, where alluded to, was commonly presented as a responsibility of the sending countries themselves.

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The research project CEASEVAL (“Evaluation of the Common European Asylum System under Pressure and Recommendations for Further Development”) is an interdisciplinary research project led by the Institute for European studies at Chemnitz University of Technology (TU Chemnitz), funded by the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under grant agreement No 770037.) It brings together 14 partners from European countries aiming to carry out a comprehensive evaluation of the CEAS in terms of its framework and practice and to elaborate new policies by constructing different alternatives of implementing a common European asylum system. On this basis, CEASEVAL will determine which kind of harmonisation (legislative, implementation, etc.) and solidarity is possible and necessary.